

24 hours without food. 7. *An abstract of a Letter from Mr. Heathcot to Mr. J. Flamsteed Astron. Reg. from Cabo Cors Castle on the coast of Guiney Dec. 14, 1683. concerning the Tide on that Coast, Variation of the Needle, &c. An account of a Book, Martini Lister M. D. e S. R. Lond. de FONTIBUS MEDICATIS Angliæ, Exercitatio altera. Londini. in Octav. 1684.*

A Letter from the learned and ingenious Mr. Will. Molyneux Secretary to the Society of Dublin, to Will. Muſgrave L. L. B. Fellow of New Colledge, and Secretary to the Philoſophical Society of Oxford, for advancement of natural Knowledge ; concerning Lough Neagh in Ireland, and its petrifying Quality.

SIR,

IN Answer to the Oxford Society's Query concerning our *Lough Neagh* and its Petrifying Quality, I make this return.

1. That it is generally agreed by all the *Inhabitants* thereabouts, that it has that *Quality*, but yet I have a Letter by me from a *Gentleman* (unknown to me, and therefore I will not promise for his Credit or the Fidelity of his enquiry) that that positively denies that there is any such thing, but asserts that the *Stones*, that are brought to us as *petrified Wood*, are found deep in Sand Hills in the *Country* adjoining to the *Lough*, alledging as an experiment, that a *Gentleman* of his Acquaintance, stuck an *Oak Stake* into the *Lough* twenty years ago, which there remains unalter'd. But I conceive this Assertion to be without ground, and the experiment's falsely made ; For first 'tis agreed by all that no *Wood* will *Petrify* in this *Lough*, except *Holly*, so that his applying an *Oak Stake* was improper ; Secondly, for their being found in *Sand Hills*, they may easily be supposed in process of time to have been brought thither, and left there : for I do not find he asserts that they are found so deep in those *Hills* that have not been dug up ; and thirdly, it is with some probability asserted (and I have a Letter from an understanding *Person* thereabouts confirming it) that the *Earth* about *Lough Neagh* has this *Petrifying Quality*, and we may well imagine that these sand Hills especially, are not destitute thereof ;

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For I am certainly informed, that a *Gentleman* of the *Country* about this *Lough* a little before the *Rebellion* cut down some *Timber* for building, and amongst others cut down a large *Holly Tree*, but being diverted by the *Rebellion* from building, his *Timber* lay on the ground in the place where it was fell'd, upon the banks of the *Lough*, all the miserable time of the *War*; till at last, the *Kingdom* being settled, the *Gentleman* went to look for his *Timber*, and found the other *Timber* overgrown with moss, and the *Holly* petrified, tho the *Water* of the *Lough* had never reach'd it.

2. I Query whether the *Holly* it self, that grows upon the *Banks* of this *Lough*, may not be more apt to be petrified, then the same wood growing other where, and brought thither, and put into the *Lough*, for certainly if the ground has this *Quality*, this is very likely to follow.

3. That what we call *Lough Neagh stone* was once *Wood*, is most probable on these accounts, first it will not stir with *Acids*, which is a property observed by Dr. *Grew* on some petrified *Woods*, in the *Museum R. S.* p. 270. tho the Dr. does there make it an Argument for his suspecting they are *Lapides sui generis*. Secondly, the *Lough Neagh stone* will burn and flame; and the smoak of it smells like the smoak of wood. Thirdly, when burnt it betrays the very *Grain* of *Wood*, with the other vessels belonging to *Vegetables*. But that which confirms me above all, that these *Stones* were once *Wood* is, because I have many of them by me of various *Degrees* of *Petrification*, I suppose according to the time they remained in the *Water*, which I could never hear justly determined; some that have clearly lost the colour of *Wood*, and are become perfectly black, and very hard; others that are not so black nor hard; But one more especially was sent me about a year ago, which is a *Parallelepipied* of about four Inches long and an Inch thick, cut I suppose whilst *Wood* into that shape purposely, whose outward coat is very black and smooth, but this is meerly superficial, for being cleft longwise through the middle (which it suffer'd far more easily then that which is more thoroughly petrified) I there discovered the whole body perfectly of the colour and grain of *Holly*, for I can scrape it with my nail; but what was most surprising in it was the discovery of the *Pith*, as plainly and as perfectly distinct in colour and texture from the rest (but it also was Petrified) as it could possibly have been seen in the natural *Wood*; That this piece when wood was cut in-

to this shape on purpose to try the *Experiment*, I am induced to believe on these accounts, first no *Tree* grows in the shape of a *Parallel-piped* ; and that this is not a *Stone* appears from the inward texture, differing so much from the outward coat, and from the smoothness of the outward coat, and roughness inwardly, which smoothness could never be induced since it was a *Stone*, for if you grind it, so as in the least to wear off the outward black coat, the rough white inside shews it self immediately.

4. What the Learned Physician *Anselm Boetius* asserts in his *Historia lapidum & Gemmarum* is certainly false, viz. That that part of the *Wood* that is buried in the *Mud* will become *Iron*, that part touch'd by the *Water* becomes *Stone*, and that above the *Water* remains *Wood*, for I never have seen or could hear of any part of the *Stone* in the least resembling *Iron*.

5. I have used some endeavours to procure a piece of this *Lough Neagh stone* to which the *Wood* was yet fastned, but I never could attain it, tho some assert they have seen pieces 2 or 3 foot long with about 8 or 10 inches of *stone* and the rest *Wood*. Tho I am apt to believe this may be stretching the matter too far, for I conceive that that *Humour* that *Petrifies* one part, when it begins to operate, insinuates it self soon throughout the whole body.

6. 'Tis observed that this *petrifying Quality* is not equally diffused throughout the whole *Lough* (which is about 15 or 16 miles long, and 8 or 9 miles broad in all places) but is most strong about that part where the *black Water* (a River so call'd) empty's it self into this *Lough*, that is about the *Southwest Corner* ; as likewise 'tis said to be more strong about the *Edges* of the *Lough*, then further into the *Water*.

7. It was queried a while ago by an Ingenious and Learned Member of the Royal S. Mr. *Hally*, whether *Lough Neagh stone* were not *Magnetical*, for he was told it was ; but upon tryal I find it is not, for it will not stir a *Needle*, or *Steel filings*, neither will it apply to the *Magnet*, in powder or calcined.

This is all that offers it self at present relating to the Query of the *Oxford Society*, if any thing more occur, they shall be informed thereof by

Their most Obliged

Humble Servant

William Molyneux.
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